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U.S. Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Administration

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Commodity *Spinach* **ONIONS**
Marketing area STATES NORTH OF VIRGINIA
& EAST OF OHIO
Time June 1 to 15

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Washington, D. C., May 23, 1942

Retailers in States north of Virginia and east of Ohio will feature spinach and asparagus during the period June 1 to 8 in a merchandising campaign designed to move into consumption the heavy supplies available on local markets.

The two vegetables have been designated as "Victory Food Specials" under the U. S. Department of Agriculture's plan for conserving food by increasing the distribution and use of farm products in seasonal abundance. Storekeepers in the northeastern area selling spinach and asparagus will list each as a "Victory Food Special" in their advertising and display material during the period of the merchandising drive.

According to the Agricultural Marketing Administration, supplies of spinach will be particularly heavy during the June 1 to 8 period while asparagus should continue to be abundant in the northeastern section of the country.

Spinach Crop Large

Most of the spinach marketed in the area north of Virginia and east of Ohio is coming from Pennsylvania and New Jersey, with smaller supplies from New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The crop in the first two States alone is currently estimated to exceed 1,250,000 bushels, an increase of about 25 percent over that of last year and 60 percent above the average. This increase is due both to larger acreage planted and higher yields.

The quality of the spinach to be on markets during the first week of June should be unusually good, barring unfavorable weather conditions. As a matter of fact, throughout this season quality has been excellent and should continue so in view of the fact that supplies in the days ahead will be coming entirely from the new crop which was planted early this spring. Most of the Pennsylvania and New Jersey spinach harvested up to now has been of the old crop which was planted last fall. This season spinach has been one of the lowest cost vegetables available to consumers.

Use As A Food

As one of the important green, leafy vegetables, spinach is among the protective foods. Nutritionists say that in the green leaves are found food materials which are absolutely essential to good health. Green leaves are rich in minerals and vitamins, and spinach is no exception.

OUR FARMERS are on an all-out war basis. They are producing more food than they ever grew before. Now and then, due to super-abundant harvests, exceptional weather, or wartime bottlenecks, unusually large supplies of some foods become available. They must move to market promptly or be wasted. These are **Victory Food Specials**. The more Victory Food Specials are consumed, the less will be the pressure on foods needed for the war. Food merchants are cooperating with the Agricultural Marketing Administration by featuring these Specials in their stores. You can help to prevent the waste of good food and to stretch consumers' food money by giving this news wide distribution.

Cooking spinach is a matter of minutes. The less time it is cooked, the more vitamins and minerals will be saved and the better this vegetable will taste. And when cooking, it's important to use as little water as possible. Washing the spinach carefully is almost as important as cooking it right. To get all the sand and grit out, wash in cold water.

As a raw, green salad, spinach may be prepared in a number of ways. One of these is spinach chopped fine with hard boiled eggs, and with some lemon juice and other seasoning for added taste. Most cook books contain excellent recipes for spinach in making salads, soups, souffles, and other dishes which lend variety in the use of this important vegetable.

Asparagus Is Plentiful

Asparagus on northeastern markets during the June 1 to 8 merchandising campaign period will come mostly from New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New York. The current total crop is estimated at over 5,000,000 crates of one dozen bunches each. While this is 2 percent above last year's unusually large crop, it exceeds by 57 percent the average production during the 1931-40 period. Larger acreage planted and slightly higher yields account for this season's increase. Quality of asparagus marketed has been good so far this year and should continue so without adverse weather conditions.

The wise shopper knows that asparagus is lowest in price and freshest when it is most plentiful and watches for the best time to buy. But she does not wait too long, for asparagus prices never fall to the level of those paid for some other vegetables. Asparagus is a perennial and monopolizes the field through the year, although the cutting season is short. Much detailed care is required in growing, cutting, and marketing this highly perishable, short-season crop.

The best asparagus is firm and fresh. Stalks are fairly straight, tips are uninjured and tightly closed. If after

buying asparagus, it must be held for a time before cooking, keep it cold, moist and tightly covered.

Cooking The Stalks

Thorough washing is needed in preparing asparagus for cooking, for it is cut below the surface of the ground. Scrape off the side scales with a sharp knife to remove any traces of grit. Remove the tough butt ends to the point where they are cut readily with the tip of a sharp knife. Very thrifty homemakers sometimes pare the lower end of the stalk, thus making more of it edible. Sometimes to make asparagus easier to serve, the stalks are bunched and tied loosely into individual portions. It will go farther if cut into $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch lengths.

According to the Bureau of Home Economics, asparagus, like other green vegetables, is cooked best uncovered in a small quantity of salted boiling water and as quickly as possible. A large saucepan or kettle is entirely satisfactory for cooking. Stand the bunches upright, about half immersed in boiling water, and cover the utensil, just until the water returns to the boiling point. After the lower part of the stalks has cooked 10 to 15 minutes, tip the bunches over into the water. The tips and stalks should become tender at the same time and yet be firm enough to handle without crushing or breaking. Total boiling time 15 to 25 minutes, depending upon the condition of the "grass."

The luscious green stalks, perfect in outline, enticing in flavor, are served steaming hot, seasoned with golden melted butter or Hollandaise sauce. It is a dish favored by royalty since the days of Emperor Augustus Caesar of ancient Rome. Asparagus has a happy faculty of blending nicely with many other foods and is a favorite for salads.

Green asparagus is a good source of Vitamin A. It is a good source of iron, which is also associated with green coloring. Green and white asparagus both contribute some Vitamin C. Asparagus also supplies valuable minerals.